United Nations A/AC.172/2009/L.1

General Assembly

Distr.: Limited
12 February 2009

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Organizational session for 2009

Annotated provisional agenda for the organizational session for 2009

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2009.
2. Election of officers.
3. Organization of work for 2009.
4. Programme of work for 2009.
5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2009.
6. Other business.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 2009

2. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational session for 1989, on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that thenceforth the chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

Documentation: Membership of the Committee on Conferences for 2009 (A/AC.172/2009/INF/1).

3. Organization of work for 2009

At its organizational session for 2008 (489th meeting), held on 7 April 2008, the Committee on Conferences adopted its agenda for 2008 and requested the

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Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 2009 to the Committee at its organizational session for 2009.

(a) Intersessional departures and related matters

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee on Conferences with regard to intersessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings.[1] At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for intersessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for intersessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General on improving the performance of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (A/57/289, para. 15), in order to administer the programme of meetings to comply strictly with the calendar of conferences and meetings approved by the General Assembly, with the exception of plenary meetings of the Assembly, the Security Council and the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, ad hoc meeting extensions beyond normal working hours will not be accommodated by conference services. Requests for sessions beyond authorized duration, or intersessional "informal consultations" that take the form of additional, unapproved sessions under another name, will be channelled for consideration through the Committee on Conferences in accordance with mandated arrangements. Statements of programme budget implications will be issued in such instances, where required.

Moreover, meetings of the Committee on Conferences may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of resolution 35/10 A, by which the General Assembly decided that all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the Assembly are to be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

(b) Documentation for the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee

In section IV, paragraph 12, of resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to enhance his efforts to address the problem of late submission of documentation by author departments, particularly as experienced with documentation considered at the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, including convening the task force formed to study that matter, to provide an interim report on documentation concerning peacekeeping financing, to report on the results of those consultations and actions taken to solve that problem to the General Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences at its organizational session for 2009, in order for the Fifth Committee to consider the report at its second resumed session,

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32* (A/46/32), para. 77.

and to provide a comprehensive report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

The Committee may wish to convey its comments and observations to the Fifth Committee at its second resumed session during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly.

Documentation: Report of the Secretary-General on measures to improve the documentation services for the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee (A/63/__).

(c) Provisional calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011, in the economic, social and related fields

In its decision 1988/103, the Economic and Social Council decided to invite the Committee to review the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings of the Council and to submit, as appropriate, its recommendations thereon to the Council.

The provisional calendar for the biennium 2010-2011 will be available for consideration by the Committee before the substantive session of the Council in July 2009. The Committee may wish to meet in June in order to review the provisional calendar and to submit its observations and recommendations to the Council at its substantive session of 2009.

Documentation: Provisional calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011 in the economic, social and related fields (E/2009/L.__).

4. Programme of work for 2009

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B.

The annex to the present document contains a draft agenda for the substantive session of 2009, followed by annotations, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly.

As has been done in the past few sessions, reporting on all matters pertaining to the pattern of conferences will be consolidated into one document in 2009. The draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011 will be issued as an addendum to the report.

Although the agenda for the substantive session follows the resolutions under the agenda item entitled "Pattern of conferences", the Committee may wish to organize its work along different lines.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 2009

6. Other business

Annex

Draft agenda for the substantive session of 2009

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:
   (a) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243;
   (b) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011.
3. Meetings management/improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities:
   (a) Intersessional departures for 2009 and related matters;
   (b) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs and consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;
   (c) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required";
   (d) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;
   (e) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;
   (f) Improved utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa;
   (g) Measures to ensure the efficiency of voting procedures.
4. Impact of the capital master plan, accelerated strategy IV (phased approach), on meetings held at Headquarters and other issues during its implementation.
5. Progress in integrated global management.
6. Documentation and publication-related matters:
   (a) Overall timely submission and issuance of documentation;
   (b) Documentation for the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee.
7. Translation and interpretation-related matters:
   (a) Implementation of recommendations provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services;
   (b) Provision of conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva;
   (c) Vacancy rates at all duty stations;
   (d) Quality of translation and interpretation, and performance measurement.
8. Organization of work.
9. Adoption of the report.

Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings

(a) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243, in which it had decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly would meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairpersons of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during the main part of the Assembly should submit their requests to the Chairperson of the Committee.

Documentation: Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to the President of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly (A/64/__)

(b) Adoption of the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011

A draft calendar for the biennium 2010-2011 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee on Conferences at its substantive session of 2009.

The Committee will submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session the draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011.

Documentation: Draft biennial calendar of conferences and meetings for 2010 and 2011 (A/64/__/Add.1)

3. Meetings management/improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

(a) Intersessional departures for 2009 and related matters

A compilation of such matters will be provided for inclusion in the report of the Committee.

(b) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs and consultations with/letters to bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

In section II.A, paragraph 3, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly welcomed the steps taken by those bodies that had adjusted their programmes of work in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources, and requested the Committee on Conferences to continue consultations with the secretariats and bureaux of bodies that underutilized their conference-servicing resources.

Statistical data and analysis of the planned and actual utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies will be included in the report. An oral

report will be made by the Chairperson on consultations with bodies that had underutilized their conference-servicing resources.

(c) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of bodies entitled to meet "as required"

In section II.A, paragraph 5, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly noted that the percentage of meetings held by the bodies entitled to meet "as required" that were provided with interpretation services in New York in 2007 was 88 per cent, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to report on the provision of conference services to those bodies through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(d) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In section II.A, paragraph 6, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly recognized the importance of meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States for the smooth functioning of the sessions of intergovernmental bodies, and requested the Secretary-General to ensure that, as far as possible, all requests for conference services for the meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States were met. In paragraph 7 of the same section, the Assembly acknowledged with appreciation the improvement in the percentage of meetings held by regional and other major groupings of Member States that were provided with interpretation services at the four main duty stations, which increased to 84 per cent in 2007 from 76 per cent in 2006, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to employ innovative means to address the difficulties experienced by Member States owing to the lack of conference services for some meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States and to report thereon to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(e) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

In section II.A, paragraph 9, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly noted with satisfaction that, in accordance with several Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/236, section II.A, paragraph 9, in conformity with the headquarters rule, all meetings of Nairobi-based United Nations bodies had been held in Nairobi in 2007, and requested the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(f) Improved utilization of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa

In section II.A, paragraph 10, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly noted with appreciation ongoing promotional efforts and initiatives undertaken by the management of the conference centre of the Economic Commission for Africa, which led to a continued upward trend in utilization of the premises in 2007. In paragraph 11 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore means to increase the utilization of the conference centre of the

Economic Commission for Africa, bearing in mind the headquarters minimum operating security standards, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(g) Measures to ensure the efficiency of voting procedures

In section II.A, paragraph 14, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly regretted the voting incident in the 7th meeting of the Fourth Committee, and requested the Secretary-General to ensure prompt and effective communication between the Secretariat and members of the General Committee. In paragraph 15 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the measures taken to avoid the recurrence of the above-mentioned situation in his next annual report on the pattern of conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

4. Impact of the capital master plan, accelerated strategy IV (phased approach), on meetings held at Headquarters and other issues during its implementation

In section II.B, paragraph 1, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that implementation of the capital master plan, including the temporary relocation of conference-servicing staff to a swing space, would not compromise the quality of conference services provided to Member States in the six official languages and the equal treatment of the language services, which should be provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources, with a view to receiving the maximum quality of services. In paragraph 2 of the same section, the Assembly requested all meeting requesters and organizers to liaise closely with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of the Secretariat on all matters related to the scheduling of meetings to allow maximum predictability in coordinating activities at Headquarters during the construction period.

In section II.B, paragraph 4 of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate information technology support for conference services, within the existing resources of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in order to ensure their seamless operation throughout the implementation of the capital master plan. In paragraph 5 of the same section, the Assembly noted that during the implementation of the capital master plan, a part of the conference-servicing staff and information technology resources of the Department would be temporarily relocated to a swing space, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide adequate support, within the existing resources of the Department, to ensure continued maintenance of the information technology facilities of the Department, implementation of the global information technology initiative and delivery of quality conference services.

In paragraph 3 of the same section, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to keep the matter under constant review, and requested the Secretary-General to report regularly to the Committee on matters pertaining to the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations during the construction period. In paragraph 6 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consult Member States on initiatives that affected the utilization of conference services and conference facilities. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

5. Progress in integrated global management

In section III, paragraph 4, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to include in his next report on the pattern of conferences information about the financial savings achieved through implementation of the integrated global management projects.

In this context, the Office of Internal Oversight Services has been requested by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to conduct an evaluation of the progress in integrated global management, in particular to examine to what extent the process has yielded measurable efficiency gains in terms of improved coherence in delivery.

In section III, paragraph 9, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that measures taken by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, as a key performance indicator of the Department, provided equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluations in the six official languages of the United Nations and were in full compliance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences, on progress made in that regard. In paragraph 10 of the same section, the Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore best practices and techniques in client satisfaction evaluations and to report on a regular basis to the General Assembly on the results achieved.

In section III, paragraph 11, of the same resolution, the General Assembly welcomed the efforts made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to seek the evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to explore innovative ways to systematically capture and analyse feedback from Member States and committee chairpersons and secretaries on the quality of conference services and to report thereon to the General Assembly through the Committee on Conferences. In paragraph 12 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to keep the General Assembly apprised of progress made in integrated global management. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

6. Documentation and publication-related matters

(a) Overall timely submission and issuance of documentation

In section IV, paragraph 6, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to improve the documents planning process to ensure that the Fifth Committee received, in the six official languages, all documents necessary for its consideration of a particular item, including reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, within the established time limits.

In section IV, paragraph 10, of the same resolution, the General Assembly expressed its deep concern at the unprecedented, high level of late submission of documentation by author departments, which, in turn, had a negative impact on the functioning of intergovernmental bodies, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, through the Committee on Conferences, on urgent measures taken to improve overall timely submission, in

particular by those submitting entities with submission compliance below 90 per cent for three years in a row.

In section IV, paragraph 11, of the resolution, the General Assembly noted with concern the unprecedented delays in the issuance of documents in 2008, which heavily impacted on the work of the General Assembly, and requested the Secretary-General to elaborate more effective accountability measures to ensure that both authors and their senior managers provided for the timely issuance of documents in all six official languages and to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences. The Secretariat will report on the matter.

(b) Documentation for the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee

In section IV, paragraph 12, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to enhance his efforts to address the problem cited in paragraph 10 of the same section, particularly as experienced with documentation considered at the second resumed session of the Fifth Committee during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly, including convening the task force formed to study the matter, to provide an interim report on documentation concerning peacekeeping financing, to report on the results of those consultations and actions taken to solve the problem to the General Assembly, through the Committee on Conferences at its organizational session for 2009, in order for the Fifth Committee to consider the report at its second resumed session, and to provide a comprehensive report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

The Committee will consider the interim report at its organizational session for 2009 and transmit comments and observations to the Fifth Committee at its second resumed session during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. As requested, a comprehensive update will be submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

7. Translation and interpretation-related matters

(a) Implementation of recommendations provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services

In section V, paragraph 4, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly took note of the recommendations provided by the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat in its report on the audit of the existing special arrangements governing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services across the four main duty stations (A/63/94), and requested the Secretary-General to ensure their full implementation and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

(b) Provision of conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva

In section V, paragraph 10, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly recognized the acute problems faced by the United Nations Office at Geneva in providing conference services as required, as described by the Secretary-General in paragraph 103 of his report on the pattern of conferences (A/63/119 and Corr.1), and in that connection requested the Secretary-General to address those problems and to make all efforts to meet requirements in the context of the latest surge of meetings.

(c) Vacancy rates at all duty stations

In section V, paragraph 6, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly expressed continued concern at the high vacancy rate in the interpretation and translation services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, and requested the Secretary-General to address that as a matter of priority through, inter alia, assistance from Member States in advertising and facilitating the conduct of competitive examinations to fill those language vacancies.

In section V, paragraph 7, of the same resolution, the General Assembly noted with appreciation the measures taken by the Secretariat to fill current and future vacancies at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the information contained in paragraph 107 of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/63/119 and Corr.1), and requested the Secretary-General to consider further measures aimed at decreasing the vacancy rates in Nairobi and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. In paragraph 8 of the same section, the Assembly also noted with appreciation the initiative to seek a long-term solution to the high vacancy rates in language services in the United Nations Office at Nairobi by engaging the services of a consultant to explore the possibilities of providing enhanced training programmes to potential professional translators and interpreters on the African continent, and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on efforts in that regard.

In section V, paragraph 9, of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to examine all aspects concerning recruitment and retention of language staff at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, to make recommendations in that regard and to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

In section V, paragraph 11, of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek a more effective strategy to fill current and future language post vacancies at all duty stations in a timely manner, took note of paragraph 92 of the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/63/119 and Corr.1), and also requested the Secretary-General to hold the competitive examinations for the recruitment of language staff referred to in that paragraph, as well as other examinations beyond 2009, well in advance so as to fill current and future language post vacancies at all duty stations in a timely manner, and to inform the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session of efforts in that regard.

(d) Quality of translation and interpretation, and performance measurement

In section V, paragraph 16, of its resolution 63/248, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to seek evaluation by Member States of the quality of the conference services provided to them, including through the language-specific informational meetings held twice a year, and to ensure that such measures provided equal opportunities to Member States to present their evaluations in the six official languages of the United Nations and were in full compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

In section V, paragraph 17, of the same resolution, the General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve the accuracy of translation of documents into the six official languages, giving particular significance to the quality of translation. In paragraph 18, it further requested the Secretary-General to

take the steps necessary to enhance translation quality in all six official languages, in particular for contractual translation, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session.

In section V, paragraph 19, of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to provide, at all duty stations, adequate staff at the appropriate level, with a view to ensuring appropriate quality control for external translation, with due consideration of the principle of equal grade for equal work.

In section V, paragraph 20, of the resolution, the General Assembly took note of the information on the impact of freelance recruitment on the quality of interpretation at all duty stations contained in paragraphs 101 to 105 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/119 and Corr.1), and requested the Secretary-General to report on the issue to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session through the Committee on Conferences.

In section V, paragraph 21, of the resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its sixty-fourth session on the experience, lessons learned and best practices of the main duty stations in performing quality control of contractual translations, including on requirements relating to the number and appropriate level of the staff needed to carry out that function.

8. Organization of work

In section II.A, paragraph 20, of its resolution 57/283 B, the General Assembly encouraged the Committee on Conferences to keep under continued review the procedures for the participation of observers in the work of the Committee.

9. Adoption of the report